

The Traveller During Ramadaan

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Source: Book – 'Fasting In Ramadaan As Observed By The Prophet (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam)' p50-53 (eng)

There are authentic ahaadeeth reported which show that a traveller has the choice whether to fast or not, and we should not forget that this example of our Lord's Mercy is mentioned in the Noble Book – the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy says:

"And whoever is ill or on a journey, the same number (of days which one did not fast must be made up) **from other days. Allaah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you."**

[Sooratul-Baqarah (2):185]

Hamzah ibn 'Amr al-Aslamee asked Allaah's Messenger (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam): "Shall I fast when travelling?" and he was a person who fasted often, so Allaah's Messenger (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said to him: "Fast if you wish and refrain from fasting if you wish."¹

From Anas ibn Maalik, (Radiya 'Llahu 'anhу), who said: "I travelled along with Allaah's Messenger (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) in Ramadaan, and the fasting person would not criticise the one not fasting, nor the one not fasting criticise the fasting person."²

These ahaadeeth show that one has a choice, but do not show which is better. It is however possible to show that it is better not to fast from the general ahaadeeth such as his (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) saying:

"Indeed Allaah loves to give allowances, just as He hates that you commit sins."³
And in a narration: "Just as He loves to give His obligations."⁴

However this may be restricted to refer to one upon whom there is no difficulty in either fasting or making up the fasts later, so that the allowance does not turn into something other than what was intended, and this is clarified by the report of Aboo Sa'eed al-Khudree, (Radiya 'Llahu 'anhу).

"And they used to hold that one who had the strength and fasted – then that was good, and that he who was weak and refrained from fasting – then that was good."⁵

Know, O believer, that if fasting on a journey produced hardship for the servant, then it is not from righteousness, rather it is better and more beloved to Allaah that he breaks his fast. The evidence for this is what has been reported from a number of Companions, (Radiya 'Llahu 'anhum), that the Prophet (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said:

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (4/156) and Muslim (no. 1121)

² Reported al-Bukhaaree (4/163) and Muslim (no. 1118)

³ Reported by Ahmad (2/108) and Ibn Hibbaan (no. 2742) from Ibn 'Umar, with saheeh isnaad.

⁴ Reported by Ibn Hibbaan (no. 354), (no. 990) and at-Tabaraanee in al-Kabeer (no. 11,881) from Ibn 'Abbaas with a saheeh isnaad. Much has been said about the hadeeth with its two wordings, but this is not the place to quote it all.

⁵ Reported by at-Tirmidhee (no. 713) and from him al-Baghawee (no. 1763). Its isnaad is saheeh even though it contains al-Jurailee – since the narrations of 'Abdul-A'laa from him are some of the most authentic narrations as pointed out by al-'Ijlee and others

"It is not righteous that you fast on a journey."⁶

Some people may think that it is not permissible these days to break the fast on journeys and so they criticise those who accept Allaah's allowance, or others think that it is better to fast due to the ease and availability of means of transport. So we would like to turn their attention to the saying of the One having full knowledge of the unseen and the seen:

"And your Lord is never forgetful." [Soorah Maryam (19):64]

And His Saying:

"Allaah knows and you know not." [Sooratul-Baqarah (2):232]

And His saying in the Aayah where He grants the allowance for the traveller to refrain from fasting:

"Allaah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you." [Sooratul-Baqarah (2):185]

Ease is something which Allaah wishes for the traveller, and it is one of the goals of the magnanimous Sharee'ah; and do not forget that the One who laid down the prescriptions of the Deen is the Creator of all times, places and people, so He knows better about the peoples' needs and what will improve them and what is fitting for them. He the Mighty and Majestic says:

"Should He not know what He created? And He is the Most Kind and Courteous (to His slaves) All-Aware (of everything)." [Sooratul-Mulk (67):14]

We quote this so that every Muslim realises that when Allaah and His Messenger have decreed a certain matter then he does not have any choice about it, rather he says along with Allah's humble believing servants who do not give precedence to anything before Allaah and His Messenger:

"We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the return (of all)." [Sooratul-Baqarah (2):285]

⁶ Reported by al-Bukhaaree (4/161) and Muslim (no. 1115) from Jaabir